

**Grade 4 Sample Reading Passage and Questions**  
**Reading for Information**

**"A Brick to Cuddle Up To"**

Text

Sample Questions

Scoring Rubrics

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## A Brick to Cuddle Up To

**I**magine shivering on a cold winter's night. The tip of your nose tingles in the frosty air. Finally, you climb into bed and find the toasty treat you have been waiting for—your very own hot brick.

If you had lived in colonial days, that would not sound as strange as it does today. Winters were hard in this New World, and the colonists had to think of clever ways to fight the cold. At bedtime, they heated soapstones, or bricks, in the fireplaces. They wrapped the bricks in cloths and tucked them into their beds. The brick kept them warm at night, at least for as long as its heat lasted.

Before the colonists slipped into bed, they rubbed their icy sheets with a bed warmer. This was a metal pan with a long wooden handle. The pan held hot embers from the fireplace. It warmed the bedding so well that sleepy bodies had to wait until the sheets cooled before climbing in.

Staying warm wasn't just a bedtime problem. On winter rides, colonial travelers covered themselves with animal skins and warm blankets. Tucked under the blankets, near their feet, were small tin boxes called foot stoves. A foot stove held burning coals. Hot smoke puffed from small holes in the stove's lid, soothing freezing feet and legs. When the colonists went to Sunday services, their foot stoves, furs, and blankets went with them. The meeting houses had no heat of their own until the 1800s.

At home, colonial families huddled close to the fireplace, or hearth. The fireplace was wide and high enough to hold a large fire, but its chimney was large, too. That caused a problem: Gusts of cold air blew into the house. The area near the fire was warm, but in the rest of the room it might still be cold enough to see your breath.

Reading or needlework was done by candlelight or by the light of the fire. During the winter, animal skins sealed the drafty windows of some cabins and blocked out the daylight. The living area inside was gloomy, except in the circle of light at the hearth.

Early Americans did not bathe as often as we do. When they did, their "bathroom" was the kitchen, in that toasty space by the hearth. They partially filled a tub of cold water, then warmed it up with water heated in the fireplace. A blanket draped from chairs for privacy also let the fire's warmth surround the bather.

The household cooks spent hours at the hearth. They stirred the kettle of corn pudding or checked the baking bread while the rest of the family carried on their own fireside activities. So you can see why the fireplace was the center of

a colonial home. The only time the fire was allowed to die down was at bedtime. Ashes would be piled over the fire, reducing it to embers that might glow until morning.

By sunrise, the hot brick had become a cold stone once more. An early riser might get dressed under the covers, then hurry to the hearth to warm up.

Maybe you'd enjoy hearing someone who kept warm in these ways tell you what it was like. You wouldn't need to look for someone who has been living for two hundred years. In many parts of the country, the modern ways didn't take over from the old ones until recently. Your own grandparents or other older people might remember the warmth of a hearthside and the joy of having a brick to cuddle up to.

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## Questions for “A Brick to Cuddle Up To”

In the brackets below each question are the aspect of reading assessed and the percentage of students who answered the question successfully.

1. **You would probably read this article if you wanted to know how the colonists**

- a. cooked their food
- b. traveled in the winter
- c. washed their clothes
- d. kept warm in cold weather

[Aspect: General Understanding Key: D Percent correct: 85%]

2. **After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Reader/Text Connections Percent Full Comprehension: 20%]

3. **Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Reader/Text Connections Percent Full Comprehension: 17%]

4. **Do you think “A Brick to Cuddle Up To” is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Developing Interpretation Percent Full Comprehension: 37%]

5. **Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Developing Interpretation Percent Full Comprehension: 20%]

6. **A colonist would probably have used a foot stove when**

- a. going on a trip
- b. sleeping in bed
- c. sitting by the fireplace
- d. working around the house

[Aspect: Developing Interpretation Key: A Percent correct: 36%]

7. **Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a four-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Developing Interpretation Percent Extensive: 12%]

8. **In writing this article, the author mostly made use of**

- a. broad ideas
- b. specific details
- c. important questions
- d. interesting characters

[Aspect: Examining Content and Structure Key: B Percent correct: 66%]

9. **Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.**

(Responses to this question were scored according to a three-level rubric.)

[Aspect: Examining Content and Structure Percent Full Comprehension: 20%]

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## Grade 4—“A Brick to Cuddle Up To”

### Scoring Criteria for Constructed-Response Questions

**Note:** Performance results may not total to 100 percent due to off-task and omitted responses.

**Question 2. After reading this article, would you like to have lived during colonial times? What information in the article makes you think this?**

#### Scoring Guide

##### Score and Description

###### **Evidence of Full Comprehension**

These responses give an opinion using clear and substantive information from the article and displaying an ability to make a personal connection with the text information. The supporting information is explicitly from the article and is used appropriately in support of their opinion.

###### **Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension**

These responses support an opinion of colonial life with unclear information or information related to colonial life that is not clearly from the article. Or, they use evidence from the article to describe colonial life without explicitly stating an opinion.

###### **Evidence of Little or No Comprehension**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article but do not demonstrate an understanding of what it was like to live during colonial times as described in the article. They may answer the question, but provide no substantive explanation.

[Full 20%, Partial 58%, Little or No Comprehension 20%]

**Question 3. Some of the ways that colonists kept warm during the winter were different from the ways that people keep warm today. Tell about two of these differences.**

#### Scoring Guide

##### Score and Description

###### **Evidence of Full Comprehension**

These responses explain at least two ways the colonists kept warm that are different from two methods used today. The explanations of both the colonial and/or modern methods must be clear, logical, and distinct. These responses demonstrate an ability to link information from the article with related knowledge about the way things are done today.

###### **Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension**

These responses include some information about how people keep warm. However, they describe no more than one difference between the ways colonists kept warm and the ways people keep warm today. Or, they talk only about the colonists without linking information from the article with knowledge about methods of keeping warm today.

###### **Evidence of Little or No Comprehension**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article and/or do not explain how colonists kept warm in the winter. They may or may not discuss how people keep warm today.

[Full 17%, Partial 59%, Little or No Comprehension 21%]

**Question 4. Do you think “A Brick to Cuddle Up To” is a good title for this article? Using information from the article, tell why or why not.**

**Scoring Guide**

**Score and Description**

**Evidence of Full Comprehension**

These responses support an opinion with a clear explanation of the relationship between the title and the article. They summarize or articulate information from the article and tell whether it does or does not relate to the title.

**Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension**

These responses support an opinion with a vague explanation that does not demonstrate a clear understanding of how the title applies to the article. Or, they use evidence from the article to assess the title’s appropriateness without explicitly stating or implying an opinion.

**Evidence of Little or No Comprehension**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article and/or do not demonstrate any understanding of the title. They may answer the question, but they provide no substantive explanation from the article.

[Full 37%, Partial 32%, Little or No Comprehension 27%]

**Question 5. Give two reasons stated in the article why the hearth was the center of the home in colonial times.**

**Scoring Guide**

**Score and Description**

**Evidence of Full Comprehension**

These responses provide two text-based reasons why the hearth was the center of the colonial home. They demonstrate understanding of why the daily conditions in a colonial household highlighted the hearth’s importance.

**Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension**

These responses give only one text-based reason why the hearth was important. Although the responses must demonstrate the need for a hearth, they do not have to explicitly mention its role.

**Evidence of Little or No Comprehension**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article that fail to address the importance of the hearth. They demonstrate no understanding of how the colonists used the hearth as described in the article.

[Full 20%, Partial 46%, Little or No Comprehension 20%]

**Question 7. Pretend that you are an early American colonist. Describe at least three activities you might do during a cold winter evening. Be specific. Use details from the article to help you write your description.**

**Scoring Guide**

**Score and Description**

**Extensive**

These responses demonstrate an overall understanding of how staying warm was a central concern for colonists on a cold winter evening. They present three or more evening activities, three of which involve the need to stay warm as described in the article.

**Essential**

These responses demonstrate an understanding of the colonial lifestyle portrayed in the article. They present at least three text-based evening activities, one or two of which involve the need to stay warm as described in the article.

**Partial**

These responses begin to discuss a typical evening in the colonies. They use details that are based on superficial information from the article and describe one or two activities unrelated to the need to stay warm (which was the major focus of the article). Or, they mention one or two activities from the article that involve staying warm. Or, they generalize about the need to stay warm without specifying any activity.

**Unsatisfactory**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or personal opinions about the article but do not discuss a typical colonial evening. They demonstrate no understanding of the colonists' lifestyle as portrayed in the passage.

[Extensive 12%, Essential 6%, Partial 52%, Unsatisfactory 24%]

**Question 9. Does the author help you understand what colonial life was like? Use examples from the article to explain why or why not.**

**Scoring Guide****Score and Description****Evidence of Full Comprehension**

These responses provide an opinion about the author's abilities. In addition, they provide at least one supportive example from the text that demonstrates an objective consideration of the article and/or text-based critical judgment of the author's competence.

**Evidence of Partial or Surface Comprehension**

These responses provide an opinion about the author. These opinions go beyond simply "yes" or "no" by demonstrating some understanding of the information in the article. They fail to provide appropriate evidence from the article to support their opinion concerning the author's abilities.

**Evidence of Little or No Comprehension**

These responses contain inappropriate information from the article or unsupported personal opinions about either the article or the author. These personal opinions provide no evidence of understanding the information in the article.

[Full 20%, Partial 29%, Little or No Comprehension 51%]

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